

Life by the Spirit



Does life sometimes feel like an uphill struggle?
Walking along the same narrow path that has been
downtrodden until it is bare and barren?
Doing what has always been done, keeping traditions
and man-made rules, busy, busy, busy without
stopping to question why things feel so hard and full
of effort?

Jesus said (John 10:10 TPT):

¹⁰ A thief has only one thing in mind—he wants to steal, slaughter and destroy. But I have come to give you everything in abundance, more than you expect—life in its fullness until you overflow!

How does your life compare?

Before you start feeling depressed let's look more closely at the shape of our lives. If we zoom in on the same uphill path (right) we see lots of greenery around the edges, and even some breaking through the bits that have become downtrodden.

At times we feel full of the Holy Spirit but at others we can be burdened by the pressures of life, loss, other people's expectations, health issues, anxiety, routine or spiritual attack.

So what can we do about it? We obviously need more of the Holy Spirit.

Take a few minutes to draw or write down what you think your life would be like if you had more of the Holy Spirit. What would your relationships be like with God, others and yourself? What would you be doing?



Now think about what gets in the way of us having the abundant life that Jesus came to give us.

There are demands from jobs, family, church, jobs that need to be done around the house and garden, social life, etc., etc. And we need to remember that we are in a spiritual battle as our Lord Jesus said – the devil tries to rob us of that full, abundant life.

And the apostle Paul writes in several of his letters about the struggles that we face on a daily basis, knowing what we should do as a follower of Christ but battling to actually do it.

¹⁸ For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

²¹ So I find this law at work: although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³ but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Romans 7:18-24 NIVUK

Yes, we give thanks to God for providing the way out of our struggles and Romans 8 really needs to be read through, as there is so much gold for us to mine and encouragement for the way we live our lives.

It tells us that, whatever our challenges and no matter how many times we mess up, God still loves us unconditionally and does not condemn us, so we always have hope and the security that comes from being a child of God and a co-heir with Christ.

⁵ Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶ The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. Romans 8:5-6 NIVUK

Our struggles start with a battle of the mind – a thought, a temptation, a desire – that can give birth to sin if we allow the thought to develop giving permission to the evil one to take us down an ungodly path.

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. 2 Cor 10:5 NIVUK

12 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:1-2 NIVUK

We must always remember the spiritual battle that is going on for each of us. The more we step up for the Lord, the more we can expect to be attacked – so we should even take it as encouragement!!

But we do not walk alone and God gives us the power to overcome whatever comes against us.

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:37-39

Last Sunday the church around the world celebrated its birthday – when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the believers as they waited and prayed in obedience to Jesus’ command in Acts 1

⁴ On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵ For John baptized with[Ⓜ] water, but in a few days you will be baptized with[Ⓜ] the Holy Spirit.”

⁶ Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

⁷ He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

How often do we sit and wait, seeking the Holy Spirit to come and fill us before we deal with the pressures of life and all the obstacles that you identified earlier? How often do we struggle on uphill wondering where our joy has gone?

Jesus came to model what the human life looks like when full of the Holy Spirit. He showed us how to relate to people with supernatural love and forgiveness, how to treat people (even the sinners and social outcasts of his day) with honour, how put the needs of people ahead of blindly following cultural rules and traditions.

He showed us how to stand up against injustice and how to change the world for the better in a way that honours God.

He demonstrated how the power of the Holy Spirit can flow through humans to heal, prophesy, deliver and perform miracles that defy the natural order.

Paul describes living by the Spirit in Galatians 5:13-26 NIVUK

¹³ You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. ¹⁴ For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’¹⁵ If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

¹⁶ So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

¹⁹ The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

So let's reflect now on the acts of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. Write down what your life is like now and what you sense the Holy Spirit would like you to change so that you can be more like Jesus and live more like Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. Ask Him how you can overcome any obstacles and what support you might need from others.

It might be helpful to use a traffic light system



- **What should you stop? Who is a bad influence that you need to stop seeing?**
- **What should you keep doing or do with caution?**
- **What new things do you need to incorporate? Who can be a positive influence to help you?**



Could the hills we climb up in our lives be more like this one, lush, fruitful and full of God's glory? YES if we:-

- Daily seek the filling of the Holy Spirit
- Wait upon the Holy Spirit until He prompts us to act or shows us the answer
- Pray in tongues (ask for this if you don't do it already)
- Prioritise time with God ahead of rushing into action
- Practise spiritual warfare – rebuke negative thoughts
- Share life with other Christians to encourage and pray for one another
- Eagerly seek spiritual gifts

The good news is that we don't have to try and be more loving, more at peace, more patient, more joyful, kinder, good, faithful, gentle and self-controlled – that is the way of the flesh that will not be sustained.

Our responsibility is to stay in step with the Holy Spirit and the fruit of that relationship produces all these things in us.

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

It is Christ in us that gives us the hope of glory. So our prayer needs to include repentance for aspects of our lives that distract and take us away from God, surrendering of body, mind,

soul and spirit to be in line with the will of God in the power of the Holy Spirit and asking to be filled to overflowing with the Holy Spirit every day.

Seek more of the Holy Spirit and ask for an increase in spiritual gifts so that the power of God can flow through you to encourage brothers and sisters but also to demonstrate the love and power of God to those who are so in need of being saved.

This is not about us, but it is about being the best version of ourselves so that God can use us to bring glory to Him, as we each play our part in His plan to save the lost. AMEN